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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 006036

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/WE (MENUTTI); AF/W AND AF/E

EMBASSY VATICAN MESSAGE NO. 206/01

E.O. 12958: DECL:OADR 11/23/11

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF
CARDINALS

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR R. JAMES NICHOLSON FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) (D).

1. (C) AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON PAID COURTESY CALL ON
CARDINAL BERNARDIN GANTIN, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF
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CARDINALS ON NOVEMBER 23. THE CARDINAL AGAIN
EXPRESSED HIS OUTRAGE AND CONDOLENCES FOR THE
SEPTEMBER 11 TRAGEDY. GANTIN ALSO SPOKE AT LENGTH ON
HIS CLOSE TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES, AS WELL AS HIS
HOPES TO VISIT IN DECEMBER IF HIS HEALTH PERMITS.

2. (C) CARDINAL GANTIN RAISED ONE ISSUE OF SUBSTANCE,
NIGERIA. HE ASKED THE AMBASSADOR IF HE HAS FOCUSED ON
NIGERIA. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE HAS NOT YET,
BUT EMBASSY VATICAN IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH
SANT'EGIDIO ON A NUMBER OF PROJECTS IN AFRICA, AND WE
HOPE THAT SENATOR DANFORTH WILL TRAVEL TO THE VATICAN
IN DECEMBER TO DISCUSS SUDAN. CARDINAL GANTIN SAID
THAT HE RAISED NIGERIA FOR TWO REASONS. THE FIRST IS
THAT THE ONLY TWO BLACK AFRICAN CARDINALS IN THE ROMAN
CURIA ARE HE (FROM NEIGHBORING BENIN), AND CARDINAL
ARINZE FROM NIGERIA. THE SECOND REASON IS THAT HE IS
PERSONALLY VERY CONCERNED WITH THE NORTHERN NIGERIAN
ISLAMIC/CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE IN THE BENIN BORDER REGION.

3. (C) COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RETIRED FROM VATICAN
GOVERNMENT SERVICE, AS DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF
CARDINALS, GANTIN COULD PRESIDE OVER THE DISCUSSIONS
AND VOTES OF THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS IN THE EVENT OF
THE DEATH OF THE POPE. THUS, HE REMAINS AN INDIVIDUAL
OF CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE IN THE VATICAN. IF THE
CARDINAL TRAVELS TO THE UNITED STATES IN DECEMBER,
POST RECOMMENDS HE MEET WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS IN
THE BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS TO DISCUSS HIS CONCERNS
WITH THE SITUATION IN NIGERIA.
NICHOLSON

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